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ABSTRACT

This report was developed by the graduate students enrolled in Education 684, General Education in Higher Education, at Appalachian State University, and clarifies the 5 steps followed to develop a program of general education in higher education. These were: (1) consideration of the persistent questions in higher education that have implications for general education; (2) building a definition of general education; (3) clarifying the objectives of general education in higher education; (4) identifying the universally desirable attributes that could be sought through a program of general education in higher education; and (5) building the program of general education in higher education. (AF)

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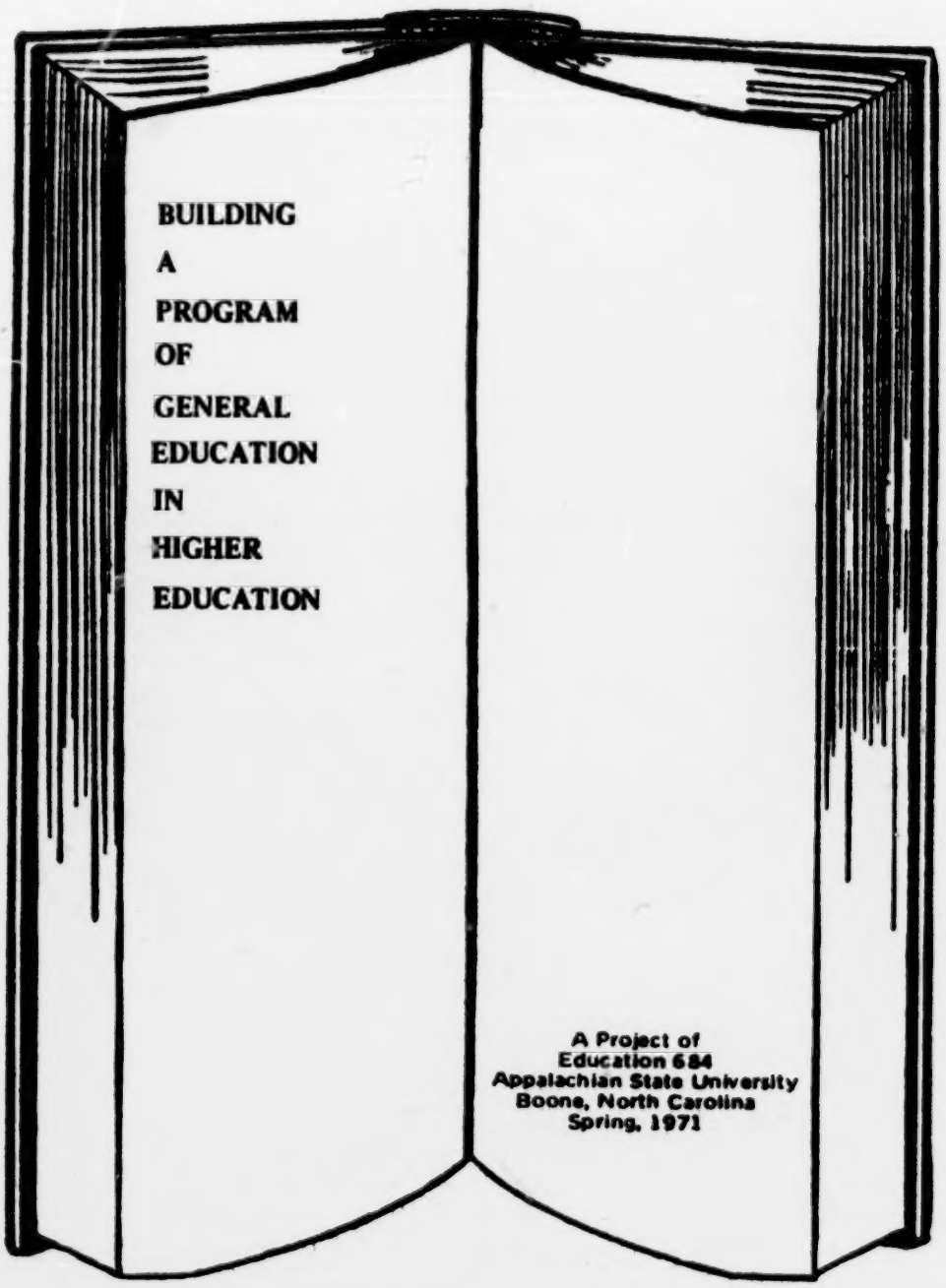

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HE 002 444

DEVELOPERS OF THIS REPORT

CLASS MEMBERS

BILL CULBERTSON
A. A., Davidson County (N. C.) Community College
B S., Appalachian State University

JOHN R. EDWARDS
B. S., Appalachian State University
M. A., Appalachian State University

SANDRA GRUETTER
B A., University of South Florida

JACK LEWIS
B S., East Carolina University

LOIS B. McGIRT
B A., Westhampton College, University of Richmond
B. S. in L. S., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
M. S. in L. S., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

HARRY M. MATTHEWS
A. B., High Point College

RAY L. MEDFORD
B. S., Western Carolina University

FRED NIEHOFF
B. I. E., General Motors Institute

DONALD E. SMITH
B. S., Clemson University

GARY VAUGHN
A. B., Newberry College

ED WHITE
B S., North Carolina State University at Raleigh

CARL C. WILLIAMS
B S., Louisana State University
M. S., Louisana State University
M. A., Louisana State University

CLASS INSTRUCTOR

J. BRAXTON HARRIS
A. B., Lenoir Rhyne College
M. A., Appalachian State University
Ed. D., Indiana University

INTRODUCTION

This report was developed by the graduate students enrolled in Education 684. General Education in Higher Education, which was offered for the first time at Appalachian State University in the spring of 1971. The methods employed included a review of the extensive literature of general education and the performance of individual projects by members of the class. The primary procedure, however, was for the class to function as a committee of the whole. The group patiently reconciled competing viewpoints as it hammered out the definition, objectives, and program of general education in higher education.

The main body of the report which follows clarifies the steps followed and the results obtained by the group. The report is offered here as a challenge to future members of the class and as a stimulus to all persons who are concerned with programs of general education in higher education.

DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES

STEP ONE - Consideration of the Persistent Questions in Higher Education (with Implications for Programs of General Education)

As a prelude to building a definition of general education, the group considered several persistent questions in higher education which have implications for general education. Among the questions discussed were the following:

1. Who will go to college?
2. What are the purposes of higher education?
3. What is liberal education?
4. What is the hierachy among intellectual, social, vocational, aesthetic, and moral objectives of education?
5. What is the priority if one must choose between the objectives of individual self-realization and the common good?
6. To what extent can the questions asked here be resolved by the application of scientific procedures?
7. What are the universals in our culture and what should be the relationship of education to them?
8. Can human nature be changed? If so, should it be? In what direction? Who determines this?
9. Is diversity in the ends of education desirable?
10. Is diversity in the means of education desirable?
11. To what extent should the interests (or lack of interests) of the learner dictate the curriculum?
12. To what degree should educational experiences be "real" as opposed to simulated or theoretical?
13. What should be the relationship of research and creativity to the educational process?
14. Are diverse kinds of institutions needed in higher education? Who determines this?
15. Who should control higher education?
16. To what extent should regional, state, or national planning supplant institutional autonomy?
17. What is the role of specialization in education? In our society?
18. What role do out-of-class activities fill in the educative process?
19. Who has responsibility for curriculum-making?
20. How can motivation for academic achievement be developed?
21. How is the structure of institutions of higher education related to the direction of curricular growth?
22. How can the demands of specialization be reconciled with the methods of the generalist?
23. What is the relationship between knowledge and wisdom?
24. What is the proper relationship between general education and contemporary social, economic, and political affairs?
25. What is the role of the teacher in general education?

STEP TWO -- Building a Definition of General Education

No phase of the group's work consumed more time than that part centering around the definition of general education. The elements to be considered in building a definition of general education were identified as follows: knowledge, behavior, skills, understandings, appreciations, propensities, attitudes, beliefs, and realized potentials. Working in small groups and later as a committee of the whole, the class decided what general education should address itself to under each of the headings above. For this purpose, knowledge, skills, and understandings were dealt with together and the approaches listed below were developed.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, UNDERSTANDINGS

- . civic
- . family
- . personal adjustment
- . recreational
- . code of ethical behavior
- . introduction to vocations
- . living in a changing world
- . forming judgments

ATTITUDES

. objectivity
. development and modification
. serving society and the individual

APPRECIATIONS

. objectivity
. enrich the individual and the environment

BELIEFS

. wide exposure to the phenomenon of believing

BEHAVIORS

. continuing and broadening of education
. optimum use of leisure
. responsible citizenship

PROPENSITIES

. broaden

REALIZED POTENTIALS

. build to a plateau
. begin a new cycle

From discussion of the elements listed above a definition of general education emerged. The definition was used as a reference point in writing objectives of the program, developing the program, and devising a scheme of evaluation.

Definition of General Education

General education is the body of learning that should be the common experience of all men and women. Further, it is that continuing cycle of learning experience that provides for the realization of the individual's potentials through the acquisition of increased knowledge, skills, and understanding which will influence attitudes, appreciations, beliefs, and behaviors and which will broaden his propensities.

STEP THREE -- Clarifying the Objectives of General Education in Higher Education

Using the elements of the definition of general education as described above, the group focused on the objectives of general education in higher education. Individuals or small groups first developed a statement under each element and then the objectives were refined by the entire group as follows:

Objectives of General Education in Higher Education

KNOWLEDGE

To provide the information needed to acquire a functional level of knowledge which will be useful to the individual in his personal growth and in relation to his environment through informed decision making.

BEHAVIOR

To provide experiences which lead to the development of responsible behavior and flexibility in adapting the individual's behavior in a changing society.

SKILLS

To provide learning experiences to develop the individual's critical thinking ability which will enable him to evaluate situations, detect patterns, develop categories, and analyze cause and effect relationships.

UNDERSTANDINGS

To provide learning experiences which will make a person aware of his own role and tolerant of the roles of others in society.

APPRECIATIONS

To provide learning experiences for an increased awareness of the worth, quality, and significance of the individual's total environment.

PROPENSITIES

To increase the number of a person's propensities thru broader exploration of the unfamiliar.

ATTITUDES

To provide experiences which enable the individual to recognize and understand the value of and need for responsible attitudes toward his society.

BELIEFS

To provide an atmosphere in which individuals should be exposed to the phenomenon of diversified beliefs; further, to provide an environment in which each individual can develop security in evaluating his beliefs.

REALIZED POTENTIALS

To provide opportunities for individuals to realize their personal potentials through continuing and diversified educational experiences.

THE PROGRAM OF GENERAL EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

STEP FOUR – Brainstorming

Having developed the definition and objectives of general education, the class used Persistent Question Number 7 (listed above) as a means of relating the program of general education to the desired universals in our society. In a free-wheeling brainstorming session, the group tried to name the universally-desirable attributes which could be sought through a program of general education in higher education. The results are listed below.

Some Universals in our Society to be Sought through General Education

1. Ability to communicate
2. Knowledge about social problems
3. Attitudes about social problems (tolerant, objective)
   Ability to respond to social problems
   Compassion for fellow man
4. Inquisitive mind
5. Awareness
6. Interact objectively with fellow man
7. Be able to find information
8. Problem solving and choices - responsible, rational
9. Competency in vocation - doing one's best in a given situation
10. Mental attitude toward continual growth
11. Awareness of laws of nature and man - FUNDAMENTAL
12. Physical fitness
13. Commitment to democratic way of life
14. Creative thinking - developing creativity
15. Knowledge of history of culture
16. Judgment abilities - rational decision-making
17. Ability to work in groups or with other individuals effectively
18. Knowledge of economic system - vocations
19. Safety education
20. Ecology (awareness of problems and dangers)
21. Acceptance of change and ability or willingness to adapt to it
22. Understand cycle of life and death
23. Education on dynamics of population
24. Self-defense or self-preservation
25. Man's relationship to man and man's relationship to nature and environment
26. Fairness in competition
27. Learn what outlets are available and useful for expressing frustration
28. Self-evaluation
29. Self-realization
30. Optimum use of leisure time

STEP FIVE -- Building the Program of General Education in Higher Education

The program in general education, including evaluation and self-renewal aspects, was divided into the areas listed below to facilitate the individual work of the class members.

. The Fine Arts
. Communication
. Health and Physical Education
. The Humanities (including History)
. Mathematics
. The Natural Sciences
. The Social Sciences
. Vocations (for General Education)
. Evaluation
. Library Resources
. Self-Renewal

The program developed by the group in each of these areas is described below.

THE PROGRAM

Common Themes

Though the several areas described below vary somewhat in their approaches, it is intended that the following common themes permeate the entire program.

- Subject matter is dealt with in an integrated manner, rather than from the standpoint of the traditional subject disciplines.
- Instruction in one area of the program is related as often as possible to other areas of the program.
- Instructors are urged to use varied instructional techniques, not just the lecture method.
- While certain requirements are stated in connection with each area, it is recognized that the student and his advisor should have some flexibility in establishing specific requirements for a given student.

The Fine Arts

It is generally agreed that the appreciation courses of art and music should be taught *topically rather than chronologically*. By this we mean that very little historical data is included in this course and it is designed for students who have had little if any training or experience. This course would explore some of the better known styles of composition both contemporary and classical. The class will consider music that they hear frequently and identify with.

Another area in the study of music will be the exploration of how music might be used more effectively in the home and business environment; what sort of psychological effect music gives; what kind of music is best for different social occasions; what type of equipment is best for the enjoyment of music in the home; tape recorder, phonograph, or radio.

The course of study should be made as relevant as possible to the student. To teach the students what techniques are used to produce certain moods might help him understand why he likes one type of music and dislikes another. His understanding of these techniques would also teach him to appreciate music even if he did not like it.

The study of art should continue in the same vein as the study of music. The emphasis will be placed on teaching the elements and techniques used to produce certain effects. The class would explore the personal, social, and physical functions of art. Also the visual characteristics of the various styles of art will be considered. The psychological and physiological aspects of design concepts and the interrelationship between the elements of art, line, color, texture, shape, and space will be taught.

The attempt in a class of this type is to show the student what art is made of and the different ways the artist has to communicate his feelings and beliefs to the viewer. Armed with this knowledge of how art is constructed the student should have more understanding and appreciation of art objects. This approach may also spur the learner to improve his own skills and become a practitioner of the arts.

Communication

The general eduction program is built on the premise that all men and women should share in a common body of knowledge for the realization of the individual's potentials. The ability to obtain that knowledge will depend on many factors. A very basic one is the individual's *ability to communicate*, his ability to listen and read, sort facts, to formulate thoughts and to express them clearly. A primary key to the acquisition of meaningful knowledge and the development of the individual will depend upon his ability to communicate.

With this in mind. the program will concentrate its efforts on developing communication skills. It will use a functional and coordinated approach rather than rely on traditional methods. This will mean that much of the material studied will be considered primarily as a means of developing the desired skills rather than being the goal in the learning process. It will seek to avoid fragmentation or specialization by providing a unified and simultaneous consideration of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. The development of these basic tools will also influence the individual's ability to collect his thoughts, think logically and make more decisive decisions.

The program must acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual; that he brings with him communication skills developed to varying degrees, developed over a long period of time and in a social setting that probably has created differences distinctive or alien to another. Also, the student arrives with his own personal goals that are most often beyond that of merely developing the skills of communicating. The structure of the program and the insights of the faculty will have a marked influence on the response of the individual.

The communication program should seek learning experiences that will build on the individual's present communication skills. The environment of the classroom should be conducive to free expression of thought and positive evaluation. The learning opportunities should be as flexible as possible and related to the student's experiences and abilities. The material presented should reinforce the learning experiences being offered by other general education programs. The study of material presented by humanities or a report required in another class may be analyzed from the standpoint of its communication content and impact. Likewise, other programs can strengthen the student's communication skills by reinforcing his sense of logic, his acuteness in listening and the ability to express himself clearly. (This suggests the need for coordinated planning and operation of the general education curriculum.)

Opportunities should be provided the student to interact with individuals in real life situations. Community service programs, perhaps sponsored by a class in the social sciences, could provide valuable "cross-cultural" communication experiences with minority groups, with different age groups and social and economic groups.

As a result of the different learning opportunities provided throughout the year, it is hoped that the student will develop an increased understanding of the nature of communication and the thought processes and that he will gain a perspective of his own role in communication with others and an appreciation of and sensitivity to the varied functional means of communication used by individuals with diverse backgrounds.

It is expected that this program should orient and strengthen the individual as he relates to those in his society. He would be expected to develop, in addition to the basic skills, abilities necessary to assimilate selectively the increased volune of knowledge available today, be able to appraise critically information obtained from mass media sources, filter fact from opinion and have an understanding of propaganda. The individual should also develop a sense of social responsibility as he becomes aware of the potentials and dangers of skilled communication. And, as a result of this other studies in general education, he should have a better perspective of the development of his society and the role of communication in it.

Health and Physical Education

Health and physical education should be available in a general education program: instruction in these two areas can be a great aid in the development of the whole person. Too often in higher education, the mind is saturated with intangible facts. In this saturation process the body is often neglected. Health and physical education should be approached as practical or applied education; education that will allow the body to endure under the strains that the mind creates.

Society needs a physically, socially, and mentally fit citizenry. The objectives of health and physical education are designed to meet these needs: development of basic motor skills, practical health education, worthy use of leisure time through recreational activities, participation in and the development of constructive human relations, and the satisfaction of self-expression.

The objectives can be met through a combination of courses and experiences that are offered by the institution. The sum of these courses and offerings should lead to favorable understandings and actions in personal and community hygiene, sportsmanship, team-work, team-spirit, first-aid, the importance of regular physical conditioning, and the effect on the indivdual of group interactions.

Humanities

One of the major complaints we hear from most college students today is too many required courses in the humanities area. There seems to be some need for a "middle ground" approach in scheduling courses required in the humanities in the field of higher education. Outlines of courses should be with the fact in mind that the student reflects about the things he sees and hears and that he compares them and notes differences in his every day life. As a student sees and hears and reflects, with some help from an introductory course in the humanities he would probably lay the groundwork of interest in special subject areas. Students of today with special interest in democracy, ecology and things of every day life would find it very difficult to try to plan for the future without taking a look into the past. An effort will be made in the humanities courses to teach for transfer value rather than for rote memorization. Students will be encouraged to generalize from their experiences and to think in terms of main streams of cultural events.

Humanities courses should be on the list of general education courses with only one or two introductory courses being on the required list.

There are many other areas in the general education curriculum which would reflect some of the general areas of the humanities courses and interest building would be a part of the instructional program.

Mathematics

The mathematics program in general education should emphasize availability. The student is able to study any mathematical discipline from addition to modern algebra. The primary goal of mathematics in general education should be to provide the student with the basic mathematical skills necessary for him to function effectively in his daily living. The secondary goal should be to assist in the development of other objectives of general education. These include: (1) helping the student develop his critical thinking in the solution of problems, (2) helping the student to express his thoughts clearly in speaking and writing, (3) helping the student to increase his understanding in reading and listening, and (4) helping the student to achieve necessary training and knowledge for his vocation.

Upon entering the general education program in higher education, a student may have already achieved the primary goal mentioned above in high school. However, the secondary goals remain very important. For these reasons, every student in general education should be required to take one course in mathematics.

Whatever the type of math course which testing indicates the student should have, it will be offered primarily in a learning laboratory situation. That is, the classroom procedure is on an individual basis. Except in small groups there are no lectures or classroom discussions. The students work at their own pace on material included in their particular program. The instructor is present to answer individual questions and to aid the students in diagnosing their difficulties. Students who choose the more conventional class system will be allowed to do so.

Testing is designed to indicate one of the following: (1) success – the student is reinforced and inspired by his progress and attainment, and (2) re-cycling – the student is not achieving and needs fresh materials offering a new approach to solving problems covered by the test. In other words, the results of testing measure progress and not success or failure. This process should motivate the student and make him responsible. The basic requirement of the course is that there be effort and some measurable gain in understanding mathematics as a way of thinking.

The concent of the mathematics course is designed specifically for students who are concentrating in other areas. For example, every student or person should have: (1) computational skills involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions, decimals, and percents; (2) understanding of a budget, installment buying, borrowing money, buying a home, and filing income tax returns; (3) ability to think quantitatively; (4) ability to organize mathematical data and apply statistics in interpreting such data.

Natural Sciences

The purpose of the natural science program in general education is to offer the individual an opportunity to increase his scientific awareness.

To do this, each student should plan to take several courses from each of the areas of study. All courses will be designed so that no prerequisites will be required. All courses will be so structured to allow a great deal of individualized instruction. Use of audio-tutorial labs and learning packages will be the main form of instruction. Group sessions will be held to allow an exchange of ideas and discussion of problems in the programs.

In order to give the individual as much freedom as possible in what areas of natural science he wishes to pursue, the old idea of a general college biology, chemistry, or physics course has been eliminated. Courses such as agriculture chemistry, household chemical products, water and air pollution, the human organism, human ecology, microbiology, botany, oceanography, optics, sound, magnetism and electricity have been suggested to give the individual an opportunity to pursue those areas that are of most interest to him. General natural science courses in astronomy, geology, and weather could be offered. For those completely opposed to taking a natural science course perhaps a course on great scientists, or a course on the function of science in society could be offered.

Social Sciences

Social Science is the area where students can learn about their government, other governments, cultures and man's relationship to his world. Tackling this much information seems beyond the scope of a classroom situation. The way to make studies in social sciences relevant and meaningful to students is to make them doers in their learning.

There are two emphases which should be placed on social science education in the general education program. First, the opportunity to understand the culture within which one lives and relate that to the cultures under which others live. And, doing this in a nontraditional manner. There is no written law which states that every student needs to look at current events from the point of view of a traditional class. Why not make the same course individualized by studying current events and how they affect the writer, or the doctor, or the educator? Putting the acquisition of information in an area which is of interest to the individual student is the'only way to make any lasting impression.

Second, experience is often the best teacher and social science education offers one of the best fields of practical work. Spending some time in a Model Cities agency, tutoring low income students, planning a project which can benefit the neighborhood are the kinds of things that will motivate students and will make their education real and applicable to their own lives.

Working within this framework, each student should take up to six hours of credit in field work and three hours of credit in seminars where information can be shared and experiences can be applied to the new information each student is learning. These courses are valuable for any student and all who are interested should be permitted to participate. Involving people from the community who are enrolled as non-credit adult education students can do little but broaden and enhance the learning climate.

Evaluation should be on a pass/fail system with peers talking over in the seminars the progress and participation involved in both field work and study. Failure should be permitted only when all attempts on the part of instructor, field workers and peers has failed to interest the student in the project and classwork to the point that he can grow and benefit from it.

Vocational Planning and Adjustment

All students are required to participate in the vocational program at two levels, the first school period of their freshman year and the first school period of their senior year. The course will meet for two hours each week during the school period and credits will be awarded according to the system under which the school operates (3 quarter hours or 2 semester hours).

Grading will be pass/fail and will be determined by the instructor-coordinator on the basis of participation and involvement by each student.

Vocational Planning and Adjustment is a course designed to assist the student in:

- Developing an awareness of his own aptitudes, interests, and personality traits as they affect his vocational plans
- Expanding and evaluating vocational goals in the light of these traits
- Developing an understanding of the occupational structure, requirements for entry, and areas of employment as they relate to his own aptitudes, interests, and personality
- Arriving at decisions regarding his occupational preferences
- Developing an increased understanding of effective job-seeking techniques
- Developing an awareness of factors affecting job success or failure.

Four basic concepts comprise the course. In the freshman course, units on Self-Appraisal and Occupational Information are presented. In the senior course units on Effective Job Seeking Techniques and Keeping the Job are considered. Following is a description of the program:

Freshman: Vocational Orientation

Unit 1: Self Appraisal

A number of questions are dealt with in this unit designed to increase the student's understanding of vocational planning.

- How can tests and inventories assist the student?
- What are the strengths and limitations of the tests?
- How can the student relate appraisal information to himself, his educational goals, and his vocational aspirations?
- What factors must be considered other than tests and inventories?

Unit II: Occupational Information

In this unit, each student is required to submit a brief job study covering the nature of the work, where workers are employed and what the placement opportunities are, specific training and qualifications required, current and future occupational outlook in the field, working conditions, entry salary and possible future advancement, and the student's impression and evaluation of the occupation. Within this unit many resource persons will be used and the students will be involved in investigations taking them into the industries and businesses in the immediate area.

Unit III: Class Reports

At this point the student will talk with the class as to his choice of a vocational goal and why this is his choice. Interaction by the class may convince him that he has made a poor choice and further investigation is necessary, or it may confirm his initial choice.

Senior: Vocational Reappraisal

Unit I: Effective Job-Seeking Techniques

Primary emphasis in this unit is upon increasing the student's awareness of the importance of properly presenting himself in order to obtain a position. Opportunities are made available to the student by which he gains some practical experience with the proper procedures in applying for a job.

Unit II: Keeping the Job

Consideration is given to topics such as the worker's dependability, promptness, and willingness to accept and follow directions. Attention is directed toward the area of human relations and its bearing upon job success. Relationships with fellow employees and supervisors are examined, together with the evidence on reasons for job turnover.

Unit III: Report on Reappraisal

The senior will reappraise his vocational selection and on the basis of his experiences to this point attempt to determine if his vocational choice remains as it was when he was a freshman. These reports will be made to the freshman class as a part of their vocational orientation program.

EVALUATION

The traditional letter grade system is not used in the evaluation of the general education program. To indicate that a student has completed the course satisfactorily, the letters Cp (indicating completion) will appear on the student's transcript. This does not indicate a grade for the course, but only that the student receives credit.

If a student enrolls in a course and for some reason does not fulfill the requirements of the course, then it will be determined that he has not completed the course and no credit will be given. Only courses completed satisfactorily are entered on official records.

LIBRARY SERVICES

There have been increasing numbers of changes in undergraduate teaching methods during the past thirty years, many designed with the individual student in mind. There has been much talk about the need for increased student self responsiblity and independent study. Some educators have been shifting from an almost total use of the lecture method to what they believe to be more effective ways of learning - independent inquiry and discussion. As colleges become more individualized in their approach, their libraries become increasingly important.

Our library will use the unified approach to instructional materials for the general education program. That is, materials of all types which are needed to meet the curricular and extra-curricular needs of students will be housed in the library (media center), which will also house and administer any equipment required for the use of these instructional materials. There will be several self-instructional laboratories where students (and faculty) may become proficient in the use of audiovisual equipment.

In addition to a central library building, there will be departmental collections (learning resource centers) and dormitory collections, each appropriate for its location. Having materials readily accessible will, hopefully, foster much greater use than is sometimes made of library materials by students in general education programs.

Students working primarily on their own will need help in ways not previously provided. As students ask questions and seek answers in the library, librarians (media specialists) are increasingly important members of the teaching faculty. Others on the teaching staff will be lecturing less and doing more bibliographical guidance.

General education demands much of its librarians. They must be administrators, curriculum builders and changers, program planners and evaluators. An alert librarian is in a good position to know instructors and students well. By observing the use made of libraries by students, he is often aware of the types of instruction being used. Since he is with students when they are meeting problems and discovering interests, he may be a valued counselor to some of them. He serves on curriculum and instructional committees because general education demands that the entire instructional staff, including the librarian, center its attention on the needs and abilities of individual students.

Because, in the past, many programs of library instruction on the college level have consisted of little more than an orientation lecture and a required "library paper" in freshman English, true competence in the use of libraries has

not resulted. Our objectives for instruction in use of the library are:

1. Students should appreciate the value of libraries as sources of information.

2. Students should understand the possibilities inherent in general reference materials and those in special subject areas.

3. Students should understand the value of bibliographical materials.

4. Students should understand literature-searching as a step in problem-solving.

5. Students should learn to locate materials through the subject approach.

6. Students should become aware of the tremendous possibilities to be found in all types of libraries, so that libraries will be a prime factor in promoting the desire for lifelong learning.

SELF-RENEWAL IN GENERAL EDUCATION

Renewal, or the concept of continual education, should be instilled in the early years of general education. No freshman should be in any class which has only degree-bound first year students. Adults, young people not seeking degrees, and other members of the faculty should be involved in each class to give a feeling of fluidity and continuousness. The general education requirements should include "free" hours in which a student can pick up any course which he thinks will be broadening and useful or just plain fun. He should be able to "spend" at least one hour of credit each term of his college career on something that is not bogged down with prerequisites, conditions, etc.

If a student sees many people continually refurbishing their knowledge in his own classes, he will learn to continue in the same direction after his own graduation. Four areas come to mind which would be useful to the post college graduate.

Enrichment courses and experiences (may be applied and field types of experiences) should be available to a student from the day he enters college doors until the day he enters St. Peter's. Opportunities to gain extended information in his major should be available. New career opportunities should be made available through the increased and continuous educational growth, and preparation for solving the problems of each new decade in a student's life should be made available.

This program is not designed to lead to advanced degrees although a well-planned program might. As for evaluation, each person must determine for himself whether or not he met his goal at the end of his renewing educational experience.